

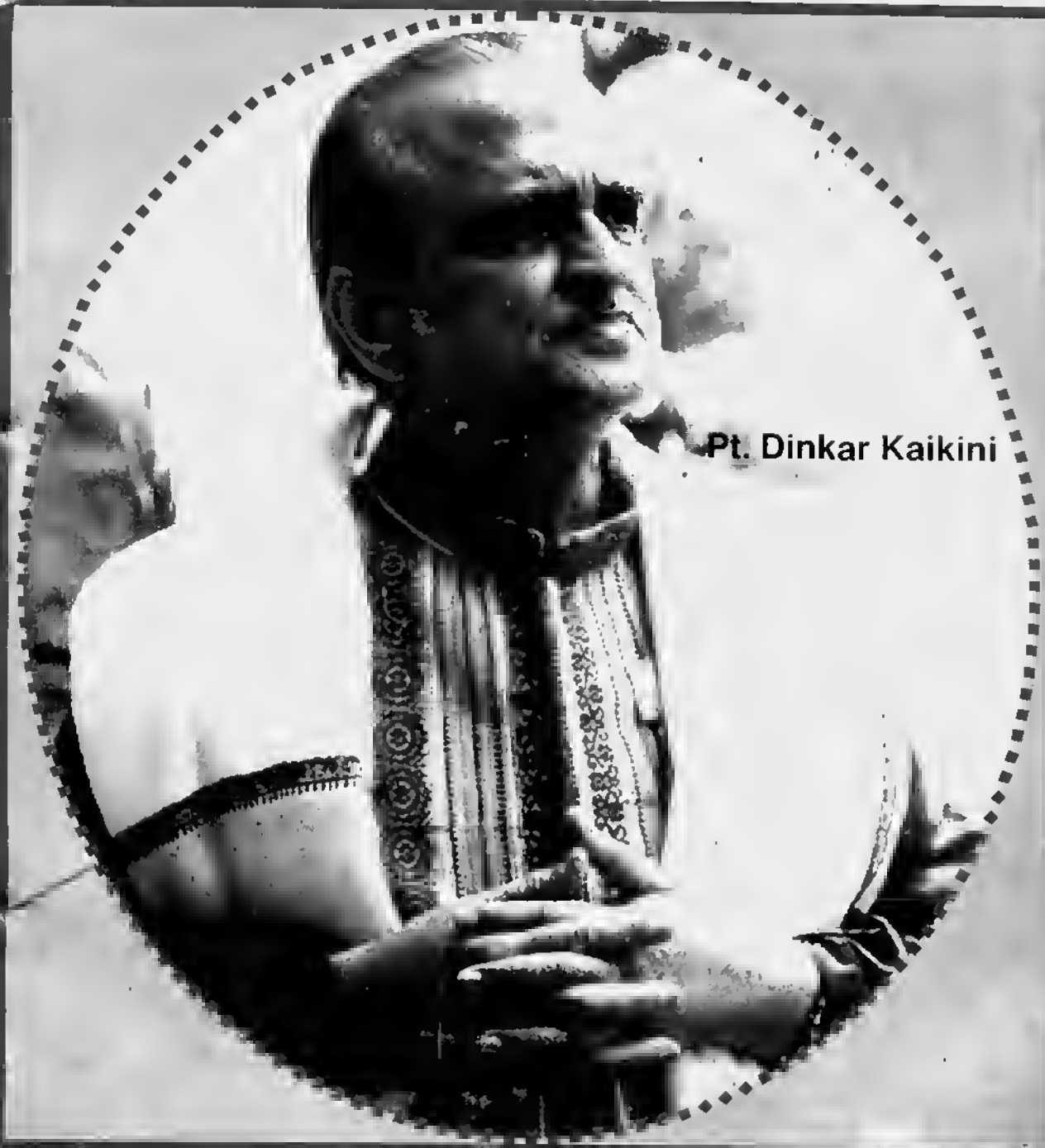


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PHOENIX

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Pt. Dinkar Kaikini

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From The Editor

With the previous issue, a bumper of sorts, PHOENIX in its reformation completed six months, months not free from tribulation. Its main sustenance has been the Press which despite its preoccupation with the arduous annual demand of calendars and diaries, has managed to bring out attractive editions. Yes, there can be no two opinions about the journal's handsome get-up. Almost everyone that our pages across has a word of praise on this count. And that is no small matter for gratification.

Another important factor which has been well-served is its editorial content, though there is no doubt that, there is room for improvement. Thanks to the choice contributors both in Bangalore and Mysore, the journal has been able to adhere to a high standard of journalism, catering to a wide variety of tastes.

To this selfless band of cultivated columnists, I feel elated to add the name of another seasoned musician a graded tanika and a reliable teacher. She is E.P. Ahimelu, Peijya disciple of G. Chennamma, the best-known disciple of the famed Veena Krishnamachari of revered memory. Ahimelu is eminently qualified to throw some light on that gifted brother of the legendary Tiger Varadachariar. My suggestion has resulted in a most readable piece. It is so full of facts, so sensitive and so very readable that I am tempted to request her to do a similar piece on Chennamma herself. The latter was a familiar figure in the State music circles for long. As a staunch follower of the country's freedom struggle, Chennamma was equally well-known among the State leaders of the day. I bet she richly deserves a homage both as one who carefully compiled the invaluable compositions of Krishnamachari, her mentor, and as a Khadi-clad nationalist who associated herself fully with the events that marked that historic past. I am sure her numerous students, many of whom had been members of the Mallurani's College orchestra which was a trend-setter in the middle of this century, will cherish it too.

The journal has, I confess, yet to live up to its fond hope of coming out well before the date of the issue. This should materialise once the pressure on the Press is reduced. And that is not going to be a long wait either. But before that I am painfully aware that the magazine's revenue sale is abysmally poor. As an invincible optimist, a la Miranber, I am doubly sure of making the two ends meet. Equally sure I am that patrons of music and dance will extend their liberal hand to achieve this objective!

S. N. Chandrasekhar

Pleasant Surprises in Dasara Music and Dance Festival -1998

The Dasara Cultural Committee's, Youth Talent Search Sub-Committee conducted competitions before Dasara. Candidates who won grades were showcased during the Music and Dance Festival from Sept. 21st to 29th, 1998 at the various venues. The participants were given certificates. The festival brought to the fore many pleasant surprises.

BHARATHANATYA : I.V. Soundarya, who topped the honours runs the "Nartana-Keertana Centre of Performing Arts" in Bangalore, along with her vocalist-husband Srivathsa. Gifted with an attractive stage presence, she opened with a well structured Pushpanjali (Gaula). Thyagaraja's "Naada tanum anisham" (Chittaranjani) was as imaginatively choreo-



I. V. Soundarya

graphed. Munthiah Bhagavathar's Daru in Vasantha tended to be a trifle fast. Purandaradasa's shop-soiled 'Jagado-ddharana'



K. R. V. Pulikeshi

gave ample scope for mukha-jabhinaya, which she exploited well. Srivathsa's melodious singing enhanced the aesthetic appeal of the recital.

Anuraga Nagaraj, disciple of Vijaya Murthy, presented group items with her co-disciples, all teenagers and budding artistes. Anuraga has acquired a certain grace in her movements and shows promise.

Kavya Uthaiiah of Mysore, a student of Rajeshri Subha Rao, is at present under the tutelage of Lalitha Rao, herself a disciple of Dr. Venkatalakshamma. Kavya and her co-disciples presented a few items well. Kavya's an artiste worth keeping a watch-out for.

K.R.V. Pulikeshi of Bangalore, a grade-holder of Youth Talent Search, is learning Bharathanatyam, for the past 15 years under different gurus. He has also learnt Kathak from Maya Rao. He gave a polished recital. Sushma Kasturi was on the Natuvanga, Indira Shankar on vocals and S.V. Bhaskar on flute. B.K. Chandramouli on percussion.

A surprise group was from the Noopura Nritya Shale of Nanjangud. Six young disciples of **Usha Venugopalan** gave a sterling performance. Apart from Natuvanga, the Guru joined vocalist Vidya Shankar in singing which compelled attention. The item on Devi was memorable. The tasteful dress ensemble and make-up of the dancers, the kaleidoscopic, smooth groupings, the nritta, the statuesque poses of the multi-armed Goddess, the entries, exits, every single detail was impressive. V. Subhanna was on violin and R. Dasappa on Mridanga.

Anuradha Gudigar a Talent Search find is a student of Nirupama-Rajendra, the



Anuradha Gudigar

popular Bharathanatya and Kathak dancer.

Anuradha has acquired the mercurial movements and vivacity of her guru. Nirupama's bols which were coming out like bullets provided the framework for the jaty's.

Rajashree Kamath, another Talent Search find, and disciple of Lalitha Srinivasan of Nupura, Bangalore has also worked for Shobhana Jeyasingh Dance Company based in London, where she learnt ballet, contemporary dance and martial arts. All this has helped her maintain a smart, lissome figure and graceful stance. With her catchy red costume, with three fans in front she did a piece on Lord Vigneswara (Nata). The Ragamalika. Varna



Rajashree Kamath. K

had a perfect unison of the mnemonics, ankle bells, the clear tattu-mettu and mridanga accents. The intricate arudis she executed as codettas after the jatis drew attention and brought out the architectonic grandeur of the art.

Among the other dancers who won laurels at the festival



Parshwanath S. Upadhye

are Prothima Kishori, Rekha Hegde, Bhoomika Reddy and Parshwanath Upadhye.

CARNATIC MUSIC : Rekha Harinath of Bangalore, a disciple of R.K. Srikantan, struck a balance between virtuosity and melody, making her concert pleasant. A colour-laden 'Siddhivinayakan anisham' (Shanmukhapriya) and 'Sarojadalaneetri' (Shankarabharana) with their unique gait were the fares served. J.K. Sridhar, C. Cheluvarej and M.A. Krishna Murthy on violin, Mridanga and Ghata heightened the overall effect of the recital.

Mysore A. Chandan Kumar (great grandson of the legendary violinist T. Chowdiah) and A.P. Krishna Prasad (son and disciple of flautist A.V. Prakash) gave a flute duet at City Palace. A.P. Srinivas (son of A.V. Prakash and disciple of Vid. H.K. Narasimha Murthy) was on the violin. The three young artistes were from the Youth Talents Search. Jayachandra Rao gave percussion support. 'Palinchi Kamakshi' (Madhyamavati) and 'Rama Nee Samanamevari' (Karahara priya) were the highlights.

R.K. Raghavan, son and disciple of R.S. Keshava Murthy, gave a Veena recital. Another combination of melody and virtuosity, this artiste impressed with his brief but ethereal alaaps of Ganamoorthy and Anrithavarshini and tana-play in Mohana which carried away the audience.

Shashank who has been giving concerts from his eleventh year has belied the adage "child prodigy—adult tragedy". During the past seven years he has gone abroad 30 times on concert tours. Must be a record for a Kannadiga. In his City Palace concert, he took up the rare raga Vijayanagari (a derivative of the 59th Mela Dharmavathi omitting the nishad both in aroha or avaroha) for detailed delineation. The only popular Kirti in this raga 'Vijayambike Vimalamike' of Harikeshnallur for Muthiah Bhagavata was very apt 'Durgashtami'. Interestingly, Shashank's co-artistes in violin, mridanga, ghata and murchchang were from Karnataka, Andhra



Rekha Hegde



Pratima Kishore, A.

Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. It was a Kala-Sangam of the four Southern States.

M.S. Gayathri of Mysore, a disciple of Nagaratna Sadashiva, was another discovery of the Talent Search. Gifted with a melodious voice, she expanded Kalyani as the major item. Veena Suresh and B. Ravishankar lent her good support.

HINDUSTANI MUSIC: Malabai Bilagi of Bagalkot, a grand daughter of legendary Amir Bai Karnataki, and disciple of Srinivasacharya Kakchandki of Raichur, is popular for effective rendering of Vachanas. In a voice which registers tellingly, she belted out a khyal in Chayamat. A composition of Shishunil Sharif in the highly evocative raag Kalingda proved her credentials. Harmonium by K.N. Kulkarni of Hole Alur added to the impact.

Veena Mardur, daughter and disciple of the Hindustani vocalist Somnath Mardur of Dharwad, rendered Khyaal in the solemn raag Shree. Like her father, she is becoming known for her soulful rendering of Vachanas. She obliged with

a Basaveshwara Vachana. Prof. B. Somashekhar and Sharanappa Guttargi of Mysore accompanied her on harmonium and tabla.

Sangeetha Kakchandki of Raichur, a grand daughter of Akchandki Srinivasacharya Kakchandai is a worthy disciple of Parween Sultana. She rendered Khyaal in Madhuvanti with two compositions in vilambit ek-taal and drut teental. The latter bandish "Gunghat mat khol ye Sham" left a lasting impact.

Basavaraj Bajantri, comes from a family of musicians. After initial lessons by his father, Thirukappa, he had advanced training in Shehnai under Pt. Yellappa Amargal, himself a disciple of the living legend Ustad Bismillah Khan of Varanasi. Basavaraj is an 'A' grade artiste. He played 'Yaman' for over an hour, bringing out the various facets of this beautiful, auspicious raag. The drut built up a grand edifice over the carriage provided by the tabla artiste. Bhimsen Mard cast a spell over the audience. He rounded off with a Poorvi dhum.



Bhoomika K. Reidy



Rashmi, B.

The artiste gave an interesting piece of information. His grandfather had played Shehnai in Dasara Durbar way back in 1922. The then Maharaja Nalvadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar, pleased with the recital, had granted him 50 acres of land which the family lost subsequently under the Tenancy laws.

Ustad Bale Khan and Chhote Rahmat Khan, the Dharwad the sitar-dhu were presented in the City Palace, with the redoubtable tabhya of Bangalore, Ravindra Yavagal. The romantic raag Bilag was delineated for over an hour bringing out its various facets through effortless dovetailing, sawal-jawabs and sheer artistry. A Poorvi thumri, again a romantic piece and a Bhairavi, compatible with any hour of the day, were the other items. A fitting finale to the Dasara Music and Dance Festival.

K. Raghavendra Rao

The Apathy Persists

Yet another *Radiio Sangeet Sammelan* is on and the 44-day musical feast promises some choice listening from a mixed bag of artistes, not all of them eminently available otherwise. The annual event features as many as 170 artistes from a cross the country. It includes 56 main performers in as many sessions, some of them dueters, and 114 accompanists. A veritable jamboree indeed!

Overall, music circles in Karnataka, at least those espousing the Carnatic variation, have reason to revel over the prospect the annual festival holds for them. In a share of 24 concerts in that category, five slots are reserved for artistes from this region. The treatment meted out to the lot of accompanists is also not as disparaging as before. Only, none of these instrumentalists, either melodic or percussive, has been considered for a solo. What is more traumatic is that the mridangam artiste from this region should have been completely ignored. All the perennial instruments figuring in the concerts are of the *Upapakkavalya* category. This appears rather conspicuous as in the Hindustani section, there are two solos for the percussive one *Pakhawaj* and the other *Tabla*. Somewhat, the AIR still seems to harbour some misgivings about the mridangam and the apathy persists. It is a pity that even among the billed mridangam accompanists, there is no name from Karnataka!

But the unkindest cut is

reserved to artistes pursuing the Hindustani mode. Indeed, for sure it appears that the mandarins in the Broadcasting House in Delhi are seemingly ignorant of the fact that Karnataka enjoys the unique distinction of being the only State where both the classical styles of music co-exist. It is not only the home of one of the reigning 'gharanas' (Kirana) but has as assiduously fostered the other prevalent 'gharanas' too. Without exception, the State has produced artistes of national stature in all the other major 'gharanas'. Even today the senior-most representatives of the 'gharanas' like *Agra* (Pamit Ramnath Naik) and *Kirana* (Dr. Gangubai Hangal) hail from Karnataka, not to speak of a stalwart like Dr. Puttaraj Gawai of the *Veereswara* *Punyashram*, *Gadag* who exemplifies the *Gwalior* 'gharana'. Another exponent of the same 'gharana', Prof. Rajnibhai Sontakke has also lately become a domicile of the State, having set up a school for Hindustani music in Bangalore.

For the AIR, however, all this is of little consequence. So far as this government media is concerned, for all practical purposes Hindustani music means the northern part of the country and Carnatic south of the Vindhya. Exceptions are made only in the case of a few artistes from the south who have settled down in Delhi. True, Vasant Kanakapur, the harmonium virtuoso of Dharwad and Ravindra Yavgal, the young *tabla* maestro do find a place in the scheme of things. It is sheer luck, or maybe because they are staffers, albeit the former is retired!

This anomaly has been pointed out many times before with no results. Nor is it surprising as the attitude of the organisation, before and after the coming into being of the much-vaunted *Prasar Bharati*, has been one of contempt towards classical music, especially the Carnatic variation. This is borne by the fact that even after several representations to seek a fair share for classical music in the schedule, when the local AIR station opted to extend the slot for Western music from half to one hour every Tuesday night, the axe inexorably fell on the regular half hour Carnatic music session! Obviously, the powers that be are more interested in catering to the popular taste rather than trying to inculcate aesthetic perspectives in its listeners. For this pathetic state of affairs, maybe the indifference of the votaries of Classical music is no less guilty. Whereas every time some such change in favour of film music is made, the move is over whirlmingly welcomed by its fans, no such response is forthcoming from the serious listeners, pros or cons, when inroads are made at regular intervals into the schedule of classical music.

The fate of the Saturday national programme and that of the South Zone hook-up are glaring cases in point. The annual 'Sammelán' is no different, reduced as it has been in duration by nearly a week compared with the one last year. When will our musicians and their fans wake up to see that the classical firm is again made the mainstay of AIR?

S.N. Chandrasekhar

In The Hallowed Tradition Of Spreading Musical Sensibilities



Pt. Dinkar Kaikini

One morning I followed my teacher to a nearby hall out of sheer curiosity. The hall was packed. Those days it meant 150 people. I waited outside while he went inside. When the volunteer on gaurd saw me, an eight year old, enjoying the music, he told me "You seem to be enjoying; so

I'll allow you to sit near the door." Slowly I inched closer to the stage. Ustad Abdul Karim Khan was performing. The next artiste was Ustad Faiyaz Khan Saheb. He was dressed in a black sherwani and cap. He looked extremely attractive, but I was absolutely mesmerised with his music. I decided to myself that if at all I sing, I must sing like him.

I was born 71 years ago in Bombay, in Khar district. Ours was a lower middle class family. We didn't own a gramophone or radio, and I was able to buy a radio for myself many years after my graduation.

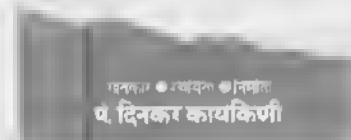
The place we lived was like a chawl. Above our floor, a Kathak exponent taught and next to his room Krishna Bhatt taught music. I came to know much later that he was the first teacher to my guru Ratanjankar and S.C.R. Bhatt. He was also the first person

who seriously tried persuading my parents to allow him to teach me music after he heard me humming a palta, I'd heard from him.

Once I accompanied my father to see the film Tukaram and grasped six songs in one



(भारतीय संस्कृति गीत)



Aao sab mil gaavo

Pt. Dinkar Kaikini is one of India's highly respected Hindustani vocalists, a rare product of Gharana training and scholastic education. A performer, teacher and composer, Pt. Kaikini has performed all over and taught innumerable students to understand, appreciate and perform Hindustani music. Reminiscent of the "Rangeela gayaki" of Agra Gharana's Ustad Faiyaz Khan, his music displays a race sensitivity in masterful rendition of Dhrupad, Khyal, thumri, dadra or bhajan.

Under the *nom de plume* of "Dinarang" he has created over 150 compositions and numerous self-composed ragas such as Gunaranjani, Bhoopavali, Gagan Vihang and Khem Dhwani.

His residence 'Anandashram' in Bombay remains a veritable home to many an aspiring musician. His own family reflects his love and pride in pursuing music full time and continuing the tradition of spreading musical knowledge.

Excerpts from a conversation with **Pramila Lochan**



Pt. Dinkar Kaikini
at work

hearing. After I reached home I sang all of them while he played the harmonium. Only then did my father realise that I was talented.

My father used to act in plays. In one of the plays I acted and sang a single song that became extremely popular. With that my father decided that I should pursue music.

There were many teachers who taught me, but I was not satisfied. Although exasperated, my father never failed to encourage my interest.

My first guru was Karekatte Nagesh Rao who started straightaway with Todi and Marwa. Anyway he sang in the Gayaki I wanted to learn.

Years later, I heard a very good voice from the next building. We found out that it was Pt. Omkarnathji who'd come to conduct a few classes. I requested my father to approach him. Initially, Omkarnathji refused, saying, "he's too young and my fees, per month, is Rupees 15 which you can't afford." But when I sang, he accepted to teach me for only Rs. 5.

I learnt for two years, but I found his singing aggressive and once I witnessed his anger,

I refused to continue. It scared me as a small boy.

A few days later I attended a performance of Chidanand Nagarkar who was learning from Ratanjankar at that time. I was deeply attracted to his gayaki, but since he was still learning he declined to teach and directed me to Prof. Ratanjankar or Anna Sahab as he was fondly known. Anna Sahab was impressed with my singing, but was reluctant to take on the responsibility to teach a 10-year old. Finally, he told my father that if Nagarkar took the responsibility then he might send the boy to him.

And that's how I reached Lucknow with Nagarkar. But the hostel atmosphere was bad. Each evening, the elders would get together and drink. Therefore one day I took a 4 anna ticket, entered a movie hall and sat through 3 shows till the morning. When I returned, Nagarkar was wild with anger and barred me from going out of the room. So I went on a hunger strike for three days. I didn't eat or drink. I told him, "take me to Anna Sahab or send me home". Since

both of us had no money, he took me to Anna Sahab and said, "if he dies, he's your responsibility". That's how I came to stay with Anna Sahab for a year or two. I felt like an unwanted child. Anna Sahab was like a strict headmaster, although once you got to know him, he was very different. I realised what a great man he was only when I heard him for the first time. He had a unique voice, but due to health reasons he could not sing much.

In the true sense my musical career began in 1939. I went to school in the mornings and practised music in the evenings.

I graduated on a scholarship and was a gold medalist, but could not complete my post-graduation due to a sun stroke and returned to Bomlay.

I used to practise with S.C.R. Bhatt till late in the night, stay over and reach home in the morning. Bhatt was like my elder brother and continues to be. I have great respect for him as my guru and my ideal. I shared a similar feeling for Ginde who is no more with us.

I began performing, but after a while decided to stop giving



Pt. Dinkar Kaikini at home with wife Shashikala

concerts for five years and went back to practising. 'Sadhana' is extremely important. I arrived at a self-taught process. Performance requires quality and confidence that comes with knowledge, experience and observation. Your conclusion becomes your own experience and increases your confidence.

As a teacher I have learnt a lot. I believe a student's mind should be trained to understand the concept of *sruti*, *swara*, *laya* and *sahitya*. Voice is a medium. A through concept develops vision, creativity and originality. Only then can a student become better than the Guru. Otherwise the student will merely recollect and recreate wherein his performances might remain a mechanical rendition.

We lack a systematic teaching method. Everyone teaches his own way. My desire is that a system should spread and reach everyone where the fundamentals are strengthened. The environment matters a lot. I was taught 10 per cent but gained the other 90 per cent based on contemplation. As a performer there should be more of 'atmaniranjana' and not 'manoranjana'.

Contemplation has helped me as a composer. I have been inspired through various sources and by being observant. My first composition was in Rag Bhupali at the age of 16. After that I began composing *bandishes*. I've composed for a Kannada play, an American film 'Ahimsa' that got shelved since the director died and for Pt. Ravi Shankar for his ballet "Discovery of India".

In fact, the compositions I've created for children is to be released shortly as an audio cassette. I've specially created



Smt. Shashikala Kaikini, Pt. Dinkar Kaikini,
Sashikali Kaikini - Hindustani Vocalist,
Aditi Upadhyaya - Hindustani Vocalist, (daughters)
Yogesh Samsi (Son) - Tablist

these songs keeping in mind the traditional values of India's culture and its need to evolve while retaining its uniqueness and integrity.

It was in the capacity of a composer that I joined All India Radio, Delhi in 1954 and served for 16 years. I gained good experience since I had to compose two songs every day. I was the Director when I left AIR and joined Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan as the Principal of its 'Sangeet and Nartan

Shikshapeeth.' I taught and presented many shows till my retirement in 1987. I remain its Honorary Director and Music Advisor while my wife is the present Principal.

After retirement I've devoted myself entirely to performing, composing and teaching a few select students. My desire is that music should spread and everyone should know about the art. Only then can its dignity be respected.

Music, Dance Institutions are invited to send news & reports on their activities. Articles and features are also welcome.

Cassettes on Music & books may be sent for review.

When Strings Take on Wings

- S.N. Sivaswamy

Thanks to the versatility of Vilayat Khan, the legendary sitar player, I think I have heard all the shades that could be heard of ragas Khamach. The possible permutations and combinations of Swaras in this raga are endless.

There were two unforgettable occasions when I was lucky enough to be in the audience when Vilayat Khan's fertile imagination was in full flow. And on both occasions he had chosen Khamaj for expansive delineation. One concert was held in the lecture hall of the Central Band Technological Research Institute located in the picturesque Cheluvanna Mansion in Mysore, while the other, in the vast auditorium of the Shanmukhaanda Hall at Bombay. On both occasions, the hall was packed to capacity.

At Mysore, the concert must have lasted nearly four hours, well past midnight. In a city which goes to sleep very early, but none present at the concert was aware of the passage of time. The audience was in rapt attention throughout. Someone told me, Vilayat Khan was a rare visitor to Mysore. He took up Khamaj by the middle of the concert and ended it with a drut composition. But for the swaying of appreciative heads there was hardly any movement in the hall till the programme was over. Such love of music from his audience obviously stimulated Vilayat Khan to proceed to give a memorable recital that day. The event took place nearly 50 years ago, but though I have forgotten which other ragas Vilayat Khan played

that day, his Khamaj is still ringing in my ears.

The second occasion I was to hear Khamaj by Vilayat Khan was at the famous Shanmukhaanda Hall in Sion, Bombay. It is a hallowed hall and many great musical personalities have performed there including the great violinist Yehudi Menuhin, accompanied on the Piano forte by his sister Hephzibah Menuhin. (I remember Yehudi Menuhin's recital only too well because I missed the first part, having arrived late by 5 minutes owing to chaotic traffic snarls preventing my taxi from moving. The doors of the Hall had been closed once the music started and late-comers were obliged to wait in the foyer till the intermission.)

After leaving Mysore I had heard Vilayat Khan a number of times on the radio, but he was soon to boycott all Government engagements (including broadcasting) in protest against its policies regarding priorities in honouring musicians. I knew that Vilayat Khan was highly temperamental and I had come across press reports about his bitterness to audience behaviour in Delhi and Bombay.

The concert at Shanmukhaanda Hall, some 20 years after I left Mysore, is clearly etched in my memory. A highly enthused audience sat spell bound in pin drop silence, to be treated to some scintillating music. Vilayat Khan played an inspired Khamaj. He was in such an exuberant mood that he over placed his sitar down and sang the strains of the bandish in his mellifluous voice.

Later, he embellished his concert with a ragamalika, the cycle of ragas dexterously weaving its way back again and again to the basic Khamaj. Truly an unforgettable musical event! It must have lasted over four hours, extending into the small hours of the next morning!

The thrill of listening to that day's exquisite Khamaj impelled me to look for a good concert-player-amplifier system, and buy as many Vilayat Khan LP discs as were available in the market. There were many, and among them I cherish and zealously guard even to this day are a masterful rendering of Darbhari Kaanda (with Shanker Ghosh on Tabala), a skilfully played Pariya, in which Vilayat Khan and Tabla Wizard Kishen Maharaj have synchronised so well to produce a mercenially varied feast of music, Jaijivanti and Rageshri with their sensitive alaps and flamboyant gats, with Shanta Prasad on Tabla at his best, and a highly imaginative Yaman, whose spirited ending is something out of this world, the creative instincts of Vilayat Khan and his clarity of notes even at the highest speed combining to mesmerise the listener.

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'Sprightly Choreography In Megha Sandesha'



A.R. Sridhar and K.S. Purnima in "Megha Sandesha"

The copious rains the State received this monsoon really calls for a 'Varshotsava'. And that is precisely what the local Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan did.

Appropriately, the two-day programme included a dance drama on Kalidasa's masterpiece *Megha Sandesha*. Choreographed by **Radhu Sridhar** the abstract concept

has a thin storyline. The denouement of the separated couple through meaningful 'sancharis' was tant, at once vouching for Radha's fertile imagination. Dancers **A.R. Sridhar** and **K.S. Purnima**, especially in the prelude filled the roles adequately. But the latter wilted while depicting Virahutkhandita at the end.

Likewise, SriKrishna was

the theme in a Kathak duet of **Nandini Mehta** and **Murli Mohan**, students of Kumudini Lakhia of Ahmedabad. "Krishna Vandana" lent an impressive opening to the 90-minute fare, a liberal dose of 'gats' heightening the dancerly imagery.

But the very next piece on a Surdas bhajan slackened in its intensity, Nandini's facials betraying a lack of direction. Murli was more convincing as he depicted Krishna's pranks for the familiar "Mayya Mori". The piece de resistance, however, was the Thumri "Mayya Mori" (Bhairavi). Nandini's trite gesticulations deftly depicting Yashoda's plight in containing her playful son.

Though it is the many-faceted Nayika-bhava that provides an ideal format for Abhinaya in Bharathanatyam, the growing trend is to draw more and more on Bhakti which does not fall into the purview of the 'nine rasas'. But it undoubtedly comes in handy as a beginning as exemplified in *Mangala Ranganath's* (student of B. Bhanumati) Sadir. This erstwhile student of Padmini Ramachandran had shown promise in her Ranga Pravesha itself. Its consolidation was evidenced in her dignified stance in the Daru "Mute Malayudhwaja" (Khamach). What enhanced the portrayal was her sprightly Angikas, though the depiction here and in the other pieces was limited to 'padabhinaya'.

Another dancer who had proved above par in her Ranga Pravesha was **Gauri Kikkeri**, student of Padmini Rao. A keen



Mangala Ranganath

sense of laya adding to her pleasing presence, her line in the 'angikas' vouched for some hard work. But her movements appeared rather lethargic, not accounting for a serious approach as revealed in the Shabdam "Sami Ninne Chala".

The central piece, the popular varnam "Roopamu Joochi" (Thodi) was also not free from that disturbed countenance, a total lack of direction diluting the Abhinaya.

Ranga Pravesha

During the interval, the dance stage saw only one Rangapravesha. It was of a male species, Narayana, a student of Jyothi Pattahhram of Sadhana Nritya Kendra.

Predictably, the outline in his style appeared almost in place. But for one who is supposed to have passed the Proficiency grade exam, his 'anga-shuddha' and other nuances left much to be desired. Though a nervous start in Pushpanjali and Devi stuthi was understandable, neither his stance nor his lines succeeded in registering any

direction even in the later numbers like "Yela Nee Daya" (Athana) or the Shanmukhapriya piece Devadideva Nataraja. Nor did any expression of substance discernible in his Mukhija. Indeed, he has to go a long way if he has to make a mark in the art!

Carnatic Music

Vadya Vailbhava appeared an apt title for the Rama-Sudha Charities series for the differently abled inmates of Ramana Maharshi Academy for the Blind, featuring a celebrity like M.S. Gopalakrishnan and his worthy daughter M. Narmada in a violin duet. T.A.S. Mani and B.A. Ravikumar provided mridangam and ghata accompaniment to the duo.

The concert got off to a lively start with the elegant Saveri varnam. The alap for Lathangi (Maricere) was as distinct for its tonal flourish. Strangely, this

was followed by a number in Kalyani, a raga with little variation. More startling was when the 100-minute concert was concluded with Mohana Kalyani. Comments thereto are irrelevant!

The fledgling Girinagar Sangeet Sabha around the same time featured a vocal recital by P. Rama with B. Raghuram (violin), C. Cheluvnaraj (mridangam) and R.A. Rajagopal (ghatam).

It was a well-organised programme, the celebrated Bhairavi varna giving it a sedate beginning. Familiar pieces in Kanada Bahudari, Lalitha warmed up the proceedings in the inclement weather. Rama's alap for Abheri (Nagumomu) and Madhyamavati (Nadupai) was enlivening, bolstered by her sensitive swara passages. Shanmukhapriya (Manamuto) was redolent with rich cadences, especially in the upper register, cascading swara korvais embellishing the modal charm. It was an enjoyable fare.



Gowri Kikkeri

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Memorable Musical fare in Sharannavaratri

Some very listenable, some first-class and some brilliant concerts formed part of the Sharannavaratri celebrations of the Vidyaranya Bharati Sangeeta Sabha at Mahalakshmi Puram, Bangalore. The 12-day festival at the Shankar Mat concluded on October 2.



V. Kalavathi

Significantly, both the opening and the concluding concerts on September 21 and October 2 respectively featured women artistes, both disciples of the well-known vocalist R.K. Srikantan. While T.S. Sathyavati gave the fine solid start, M.S. Shreela's seasoned vocalism gave it a fitting finale. T.V. Ramaprasad, Hamsini Nagendra, A.P. Saravathama (flute), V. Kalavathi, S.K. Anil Murthy, Revati Murthy (veena) and S. Shankar were the others who performed in the presence of Vidyaranya Bharati Guraji.

Sathyavati, the well-known scholar-musician opened the concert-series with a few well-chosen kritis in haunting

pieces like 'Vinayaka' (Vagavahini) 'Devi Brava' (Chintamani) 'Annapurne' (Sama). Her niraval and swara at 'Payasaanna' in the latter Kriti was melodious and apt. An unusual Dikshitar kriti 'Bala Krishnan' in Gopikavasantham was a real treat. The main raga—Todi was decorated with Nilambari and Kapi.

Sathyavati never overstates. Her music is subtle, melodious and tuneful, though her voice sounds strained in the higher octave.

Rama Prasad has a rich and carrying voice and it is always a pleasure listening to him. He could give a little more attention to Alapaana and Mahapraana, like in Bhannukulanahudhi sounded Bannukulanahoodi.

Sri Mahaganapati (Nata), 'Mamavatu Sri Saraswati' (Himilola) 'Mayaveta' (Maya mahavagowla) were rendered in quick succession. 'Janani' (Rastigowla), 'Kumalahamam' (Kalyani) and 'Srichakraraksha' (Ragamalika) were notable for sheer listening pleasure. He concluded his concert with two or three devaranamas already popular through his cassette.

Hamsini is at once appealing because of her melodious voice which stays in tune and unstrained in Taara sthaayi. She sang 'Ekadantam' (Bilahari) 'Ekamresha' (Suddha Saveri), 'Amha Nina' (Athaana) followed by 'Ammaraayamma' (Kalyani) which was given a detailed airing. 'Rajaraja' in Niroshtha and 'Narajanma' (devaranama, Kambhojhi) were equally appealing.

— Kusuma Rao

H.N. Meera has a good, strong, rich, carrying voice. Even during a short power-failure, she could be heard well at a distance. Her 'Siddhi-vinayakan' (Shanmukhapriya) followed by 'Maute' (Khamach) were a treat. A detailed alapana preceded 'Sudhamayi' (Anand-amritavarshini). The second half of the concert after the 'Todi' was entirely devoted to devaranamas - for which she is well known.

Saravatham gave a fine Flute recital beginning with the Sriragavarna, a Kriti in Nata and 'Manyala' (Nalinakanti). A detailed alapana of Vasantha-bharyavi followed by 'Nee Dayarada' and 'Sriramapadama' in Anritavahini were some of the delights he offered.

Kalavathi is one of our highly talented young, versatile Vocalists whose concerts are worth attending. After the Sahana varna, 'Sarasirubhasana' (Nata), 'Sankaraguruvaram' followed. A rarely heard Dikshitar Kriti in Shanmukhapriya - 'Sadasraye' - was sung in effortless, melodious tilt. 'Marngelara', 'Brahmaanda Valaye', 'Janani', 'Bhaginidrasayinam' were the other songs she regaled us with.

Anil Murthy's music was neat and focussed. His 'Nimmuvina' (Kalyani) was notable for the niraval and swara in the 'charana' passage 'Padapankaja'. 'Todi brought out the ragabhaava expertly, followed by 'Nimmamminana'. Niraval and swara elaboration at 'Kamakshi Kanjadalayutakshi' was to the point.



H. N. Meera

Revathi Murthy's Vena solo was notable for effortless and faultless rendering even in the drut, 'Bhuchya' (Khamach) and 'Marivere' (Ananda Bhairavi) were soothing and reposeful. Shanmukhapriya followed by taana-malika in Kaapi and Behag came out timelessly as did the Kriti 'Marivere' that followed. Niraval and Swara at 'Sannataanga Sree' were crisp, melodious and authentic.

S. Shankar, well-known in music-circles did not disappoint. He gave a highly satisfying performance. His popularity stems from his deep felt, involved music which is melodious and soulful. 'Samhita Mahadeva' (Kamavardhini) 'Akhilandeshwari' (Dwijavanthi) 'Shringapuradhiswari' (Kalyani) and 'Bhuvanayi' had vintage quality... (Hindola) and 'Nagalingam' (Muhana) came out refreshingly. He sang a special song 'Namami Shankara' in honour of the Gurnji which was thoughtful and appropriate for the occasion.

M. S. Sheela's concert needless to say was a resounding success. Right from the initial Natakaranji Varma to the 'Mangala Senti' 'Pavamana', she invoked and maintained an aesthetic atmosphere with ease and good humour. The audience-attention never wavered for a moment. The organisers were far unsparingly spared the trouble of intervening with requests for peace and quiet!

When she sang propitiating Sri Sharadamba referring to her as 'Shashimugala, nasunageya haale' in the Kalyani devaranama 'Varava Kudu enage', one felt that the telling phrase was applicable to the artiste herself, in a large measure.

Earlier she sang 'Panchamaatanga' (Malahari), 'Saraserudhasanapriye' (Nata), 'Saraswati Namastute' (Saraswati), each a gem, sparkling with beauty. Two Vasudevacharya's pieces 'Devi Rama' (Vasantha) and 'Sri Chennundeswari' (Bilahari) stood out for their grace and melody. The devaranama 'Narayana Enni' (Behag) was preceded by Ugahhoga in Hindola and Saaveri and sounded very pleasing for their tonal flourish.



M.S. Sheela

Of the accompanying artistes violinists, Jyotsna S., Usha C.S. and Nalina Mohan came in for well-deserved accolades from the audience. Violin Vilwans A.R. Krishna Murthy, K.V. Raja Iyengar, R. Raghuram, T.S. Krishna Murthy, G.K. Sreedhar and B. Raghuram all played with great gusto and understanding. T.S. Chandrasekhar, H.S. Krishna Murthy, B.S. Majumath, C. Cheluvareju, Anur Ananta-krishna Sharma, V. Krishna, B. Dhruvaraj, T.N. Ramesh, N.

Vasudev and H.S. Sudhendra - all seasonal mridangam artistes contributed to the success of the concerts. Ghatam Vilwans were Dayananda Mohite, G. Omkar, K.N. Krishnamurthy and Ranganatha Chakravarthy who lent able support and charmed the audience with their wizardry during 'Tani Avartanam'. Khanjira artistes A.S.N. Swamy, N. Amruth, G.P. Vyasa Vittala and A.V. Kashinath impressed with their skill. Mursing Vilwans M.V. Sampathkumar Sharma and L. Bhreemachar played for T.V. Rama Prasad and S.K. Anil Murthy respectively.

The religious part of the festival consisted of daily homas and pujas, which were as largely attended. But the venue itself is far from being ideal for music concerts far more than one reason. The temple atmosphere with constantummings and goings of devotees is rather distracting. The traffic in the adjacent main is another nuisance. Added to these is the festive season which is freely used by frequenters for socialising! The construction activity for the Kalyana Mantapa further heightens the dreihel level!

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'Puliyogarai' Veena Krishnamachar

(Part - I)

E. P. Alamelu



"Puliyogarai" Veena Krishnamachar

The suffix Puliyogarai in the name of a musician may sound incongruous. But as one reads on, the enigma will unravel itself to reveal that Veena Krishnamachar, the versatile artiste was an as

erudite exponent of music as he was an expert in the preparation of the famous Iyengar delicacy. In his earlier days, the veteran vainika used to daily cook Puliyogarai for the 'naivedyam' for Sri Rama at the local temple.

The last phase of the 19th century had seen the birth of three brothers who were musical geniuses, serving the cause of Carnatic music in manifold ways. The famous 'Tiger' Varadachar, K.V. Sreenivasa Iyengar and Veena Krishnamachar, the hero of this writeup were, the illustrious trio.

Born in 1883 as the youngest son of Matam Ramanujachar, Krishnamachar had shown great promise in music at a very young age itself. Due to the indigent circumstances, he was supported financially by one Tiruvengadanatha Chettiar of King & Co. to learn music under Neelakanta Shastry. Parupalli Ramakrishnayya Panthulu, the renowned vocalist, who was greatly impressed by the youngster's talent, took him to Vijayawada to continue his lessons in music under his daughter-in-law. Having mastered all the intricacies in the art, Krishnamachar returned to Chennai where he became the Guru of Bangalore Tayi and Parur Sundaram Iyer.

Krishnamachar from his tender age was a devotee of Lord Rama. Such a staunch 'bhakta' suddenly lost his legs and was reduced to a cripple. In that mental agony, he would burst out spontaneously with a number of Kritis and was soon recognised for his scholarship. He has to his credit nearly 400 compositions. Though he was born in Tamilnadu, he decided to settle

down in Karnataka and his compositions are mostly in Telugu.

Besides being a seasoned vocalist, Krishnamachar was an expert veena-player, keeping the instrument in a horizontal position. He was primarily known as a vainika and came to be referred to as Veena Krishnamachar. His singing style was also distinct, using as he did the veena 'gamakas' to enrich the 'bhava' in the Kritis. He was as good in playing several other instruments like the Nagaswara, flute, mridanga and dala. Indeed, he was a musicologist, well versed in Bharathanatyam too.

Krishnamachar has many compositions to his credit, especially for the beginners like Jatiswara, Swarajathi, Varna, Padavarna and 'Madhyamakali' Kritis. Besides there are Manipravala Kritis, Javalis, 'Thillanas', Tharanas and Devara namas of high calibre among them. The Kalyani Swarajathi is proof enough for his erudition for using all possible 'gamakas' and 'dhatu swaras' in such a way that the piece is verily a masterpiece.

He has composed more than 30 Varnas. He had adopted the old tradition of singing the Varna, i.e., after delineating the 'ottukade swaras' and the last 'korvai' which is of three 'avarthas'. The 'chitteswara' is rendered and the Pallavi repeated thereafter. His Attathala Varnam in Begade excludes the 'nishada' prayaga and his Varna in Kharaharapriya, dedicated to His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore, has 'Swarakshara' in the last 'ettukade' swaras.

His first composition is 'Karnakara' in Sama. His

compositions are characterised by different 'eduppus' and varied ragas, some in rare Hindustani modes too... Prone to fall sick frequently, he would spontaneously burst out with kritis, praying the Almighty to save him from pain and suffering. Ikann Nenematra in Purvi kalyani is one such Kritis. In it he appeals to the Almighty to relieve him of all his troubles and give refuge for him in his feet.

Raga Divyamalathi, a rishabha 'varjya' raga derived from Natabhairavi is his own creation. Another such creation is Shuddha Kambodi, a janya of Harikambodi with Nishada 'varjya'. In his piece in Kadamakuthuhala, well-knit with beautiful 'sangathis', he address Rama saying, "though a Sarvathamia you had to face innumerable hardships in this material world. How can we, mortals, think that our troubles are great".

Krishnamachar has composed a Kritis on Vasantha Vallabharaya Swami of Vasanthapura in Bangalore. It is in Kharaharapriya with a plethora of 'sangathis'. His composition in Shankarabharanam 'Panchayudhadhara' is purely for voice culture and 'Akara' sadhana. "Hamsadhvani" has very few Kritis in the 'vilamba' kala. One such is his 'Rakshasa Ganamu' in which he emphasises that a Vidya Guru should be a seasoned exponent so as to produce worthy Sishyas. In his rare and moving Natabhairavi piece 'Yepapamunu Chesu', he has earnestly prayed to God to end his life as early as possible and relieve him of the punishment ordained on him.

Once he had found there was some relief from the

lingering pain. He was hoping that his ailment would not endure any longer. But fate willed it otherwise. Suddenly his fingers got twisted and he lost all strength in his right leg. He became unconscious for the whole day. The very next day, his brother Tiger Varadachar happened to be in Bangalore. Seeing his brother's pathetic condition, he immediately got him medical aid. Krishnamachar soon regained consciousness and burst out singing "Nenenaparadhamu" in Chayalaga-Khamasu, a dwiwnyaswara bhashanga raga. Listening to the song Varadachar's eyes welled up with tears. In the Kritis the composer questions the Almighty whether that was the way he should be rewarded for constantly singing His praise.

Most of his Kritis are spontaneous outpourings of his agony. Hence they are all very touching. Sometimes, fed up of praying, 'Ninda Stuthis' would result. "Neevanti Deivamu" (Kharaharapriya) is one such. Often he would regret composing such Kritis, as exemplified in "Yenadu Bhagyame" (Saranga), where he says he has been blessed with favours which even saints and jnanis have not attained. He explains all that he had seen, heard and experienced in his daily life in 'rakthi' raga javalis.

Krishnamachar was of kind disposition. He would always feed a student before starting the lessons, as he was doubtful if she would have been fed properly by her in-laws!

"Idi Yeti Baadale", a Javali exemplifies the torture inflicted on the daughters-in-law by her in-laws.

(To be concluded)

Awardees All!

Lachchu Maharaj Award

The Uttar Pradesh Government from this year, has instituted the "Lachchu Maharaj Award" in memory of the legendary Kathak maestro. The first award was given away on September 2 to film actress Rekha, for her immortal role of a dancer in the Hindi movie 'Umrao Jaan'. Rekha, who appeared before the people of Lucknow 18 years after the movie was produced, received the award comprising Rs. 51,000, a memento and an angavastram, from the U.P. Governor Surajbhan.

During the award ceremony, a seven-year old Kathak dancer of Benaras Gharana, Kum. Ananya Mishra gave a captivating recital. Rekha was so impressed that she presented the entire award amount to the girl. The governor also announced Rs. 11,000 to be awarded to Ananya.

□ K. Raghavendra Rao

The last quarter of a calendar year, in its wake comes out with the announcement of an array of awards at the State and national levels. It has also to be noted that Karnataka gives away more number of such awards than any other State in the country or even at the national level. The list of such awards goes on increasing every year!

In all fairness, the awardees list should start with the prestigious Rajya Sangeeta Vidwan 'prashasti'. Which this year is conferred on **Vidushi N. Chokkamma**. Of equal eminence is the Kanaka-

Purandhara 'Prashasti', the recipient being the venerable **Dr. Puttaraja Gawai** of Veereswara Panyashram, Gadag.

But the highest honour of the State, the Sangeeta Ratna 'T. Chowdaiah award has gone to **Dr. Rajeesh Thirumath**, the well-known 'sarodia', though the award is proposed to be conferred on this senior student of Ustad Ali Akbar Khan only after his return from his sojourn in America.

Other distinctions in the cultural panorama of the State are:

Rani Shantala Prashasti : **U.S. Krishna Rao** of Mangalore (1997). **H.R. Keshavamurthy** of Bangalore (1998).

Sishupal Sharif Prashasti: **H.R. Leelavati** of Mysore.

Gulabi Veeranna Prashasti: **Master Hirannaiya**, Bangalore.

Jamapadi Sri Prashasti : **Pakeeravva Gudisagar**.

Venkatappa Prashasti : **P.R. Thippeswamy** of Mysore.

Among the other honours which are as prestigious as the above are:

Ganakala Shree of the Karnataka Ganakala Parishat for which flautist **T.R. Srinath** was selected for the year; Sangeeta Kularatna of Bangalore Gayana Samaja conferred on Khanjari Vidwan **H.P. Ramachar**. For the Ganakala Bhushana title of the Ganakala Parishat **Rajalakshmi Tirumanyam** has been selected for the year. It will be conferred on this senior Veinika of the State in the ensuing annual musicians' conference of the Parishat.

PHOENIX extends its hearty congratulations to all these distinguished artistes and wishes them all continued achievements in the years to come.

Off to the Straits

Popular artiste couple TV Ramprasad and Indira Kadambi, accomplished performers in Carnatic Vocal & Bharatanatyam are off to Singapore and Malasia on a performing tour sponsored by Rajalingam productions. They are slated to perform in 15 concerts in their whirlwind 25-day tour of the two countries from Nov. 15 to Dec. 9 1998.

Charulatha on violin, B.C. Manjunath on the mridangam and Narayanamurthy on ghatam, are accompanying them.

Only recently the couple had returned from a tour of Europe and America.

WORTHY OF RECOMMENDATION



Sir,

Your Editorial "In Defence of Ranga Pravesha" (July, 1998) takes a balanced view of the prevailing situation. I am not aware whether there is any sanction to Ranga Pravesha in our Lakshana Granthas. The "Gajje Puje" ceremony belongs to a totally different social ethos. As you have rightly observed, if Ranga Pravesha is to serve the purpose of testing the capabilities of the debantante (*inter-alia* of the guru also), the ritual has to become less expensive.

In this context, I have detailed below the practice that is being followed by Nandini Eashwar of "Raasa Vrunda" of our city :

- (i) Ranga Pravesha is arranged in a temple during morning pujas. Sri Venkataramanaswamy Temple in V.V. Mohalla or Iswara Temple in Chamarajapuram have adequate space for the stage and audience.
- (ii) Knowledgeable people and family members are among the invited.
- (iii) No special dress or ornaments is compulsory. Practice-dress is encouraged.
- (iv) Before the event, the Guru presents the following to the debantante, after placing them before the deity and getting them sanctified :

(a) A pair of ankle bells, the Guru herself tying these; (b) A pair of cymbals; (c) A shawl, which becomes a "raksha-kavarha" to the student; (d) a brass-lamp, symbol of spreading the light of knowledge and (e) slash of red sugar-candy to carry sweet memories of the occasion.

- (v) The full margin of Bharatanatyam is presented.
- (vi) No intermediate speeches or comments are allowed. However, after the performance, comments, acclamations and blessings are welcome.
- (vii) Expenses are restricted to the following items : (a) Inexpensive invitation letters and phone-calls; (b) an abhishikha to the deity, (c) modest remuneration to the co-artist, with tamblala, a shirt-piece or a pair of dhotis, (d) if the student is bent upon presenting something to the guru, Nandini accepts an inexpensive blouse-piece or a cotton saree fit for daily use.

The temple authorities do not charge anything extra for holding the Ranga Pravesha. Only the dates should be suitable.

- (viii) In case, a student appears for Vidwat examination, that by itself is taken as Ranga Pravesha and even the above ritual is not insisted upon.
- (ix) In case, the student comes from a well-to-do family and the parents insist on a glittering event, it is held. But even here, the ritual in a temple is a must prior to the Ranga Pravesha in an auditorium. All speeches by Chief Guests, well-wishers, etc., as well as thanks-giving are held before the recital begins, so that the performance has a run through.

The system being practised by Nandini Eashwar lends sanctity, solemnity and grace to the occasion, has no compulsion about it, is inexpensive and what is more, serves the purpose of a Ranga Pravesha.

It is worthy of commendation.

K. Raghavendra Rao
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